

In the News

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

Volume 2, Issue 1, January 3, 2003

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Message From the Mayor

As the Mayor of this great city, I am a servant of all the people of the District of Columbia. Four years ago, I was filled with ideas and ideals, eager to get started, and yes, perhaps a bit green in foreseeing all the challenges awaiting us. We came together, we worked together, and we achieved together.

As Mayor, the first theme I hear again and again is that we must educate our children; they are our pride, our hope, and our future. We will increase our efforts to help attract and retain excellent teachers by offering competitive salaries and incentives such as our homeownership assistance. We will do all we can to make sure they have the tools they need to teach our children, and we will work closely with the Board of Education.

The second theme that emerged from the people so powerfully is that we must expand opportunity for all. This is particularly important as we take a good hard look at the national economy. For the past two years, cities, counties and states across the nation have been hit hard by our stagnant economy. We are facing tough fiscal times, and it may get worse before it gets better. Now more than ever, we need to make sure that every resident has the tools they need to participate fully in our economy.

It is not acceptable that one in five of our residents live in poverty. It is not our destiny to be a city of rich and poor. That is why I will dedicate much of my energy and resources over the next four years to opening doors of opportunity for everyone in this city. Let us start by connecting District residents with jobs — good jobs that enable a man or woman to climb the ladder of success, to move up and out of poverty.

Most of all it means getting serious about literacy. Almost 37 percent of the adults in this city read only at a third grade level. It is not acceptable that four out of 10 District residents cannot complete a job application or advance beyond an entry-level position. I pledge to find the funding that will allow us to establish a team of 20 full-time "literacy leaders" from other career paths, help them become certified to teach adults, and send them to serve in neighborhood-based organizations.

Nothing opens the door to opportunity like the door to a decent home. We have significantly increased the amount of housing over the past four years, and I'm proud of that accomplishment. But the need for affordable housing is great. Over the next four years, we will focus our housing efforts in three critical areas: housing for homeless and very poor people, affordable housing for working poor families, and homeownership for low- to moderate-income people.

The third thing that people have said again and again is that crime in our Nation's Capital is still too high. Over the next four years, we will continue our progress to lower the crime rate in the District, and bring it down in our neighborhoods; and that starts with lowering the murder rate. This year's increase is not acceptable. I am not willing to sacrifice one more young person to senseless violence; one more young man to the criminal justice system. Our faith leaders, parents, and police officers working together are beginning to make progress in some neighborhoods. We must build on this work.

Three messages, three themes, three priorities. The voice of the people. Three priorities for the next four years: educate our children, expand opportunity for all, and keep our neighborhoods safe. These are important ideals, critical to achieving our vision for the District.



AGENCY WEBSITES

[Office of Tax and Revenue](#)

[Department of Parks and Recreation](#)

[Department of Employment Services](#)

[Metropolitan Police Department](#)

[Office of Boards and Commissions](#)

[Commission on the Arts and Humanities](#)

[Advisory Neighborhood Commissions](#)

Community Profile

Michael Clark, DC's Youth Mayor

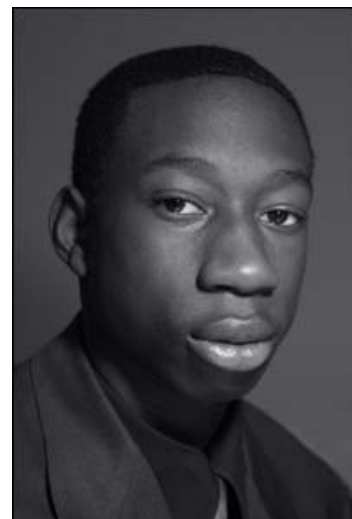
This week's community profile is well-timed. Michael Clark is the District's new Youth Mayor, and he had the privilege of introducing Mayor Williams at the Inauguration on January 2.

Michael is a 16-year-old junior at the District's Hyde Leadership Public Charter School who feels that young people are equally as responsible as adults for making choices for the city. This inspiring platform captured the admiration and support of young voters, and Michael won election last fall with a majority of 92 votes out of the 157 votes cast.

Michael ran for election because he feels that "the voice of youth is not heard in the government." With the help of his cabinet, led by Deputy Youth Mayor Anthony Robeson, Michael plans to stimulate youth participation in city government. He will be responsible for consolidating the concerns of young people and presenting them to city officials. Additionally, Michael will work with the Mayor and the DC Council to organize recreational activities designed to introduce young people to city officials.

Young people are a vital part of our city. It is essential that we work closely with them, as young people who are active in government grow up to be adults who are active in government and community affairs.

Thanks, Michael, for your commitment to the city of Washington, DC.



Michael Clark

An Open Letter to the White House

Two weeks ago, I cosigned a letter to President Bush requesting that the White House be re-opened for tours during the holiday season. Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton and Council Chairman Linda Cropp also signed the letter, in which we described why we think the White House should be open to all citizens for tours.

It's imperative that we signal to the nation that Washington, DC is safe and open for business. One way to do that is to make sure that all of our tourist attractions are available to our city's visitors. I believe that we can keep our monuments and museums open and secure, and I would like to see the president bring the White House in line with our other attractions.

The letter to the president emphasized that families were discouraged from visiting the District during December when they learned that the White House was not open for tours. It was suggested that a limited number of families with children be allowed to tour the White House, if they were willing to leave their social security numbers in order to be screened.

We appreciate that last year President Bush opened the Christmas tree lighting ceremony to the public and that that he recently lit the nation's Christmas tree in a public ceremony. In addition, in response to our request that the White House itself be open to tourists, he agreed to allow tours by veterans' and school groups. We are gratified that a number of our own schools have taken advantage of this opportunity.

I believe that the holiday season provides an opportunity to expand the availability of White House tours to another important group, while at the same time assisting the District of Columbia economy. The White House is perhaps the most sought after tourist attraction in the city, especially at Christmas when many are attracted to the city to see the uniquely beautiful White House decorations.

When people learn that they cannot obtain White House tours for themselves and their children under any circumstances, we lose not only single visitors but also entire families. This loss of revenue would always be serious, but it is especially so today, given the state of the national and local economy.



Affordable Housing Projects Grow

At Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ on North Capitol Street on December 20, I was pleased to announce the Department of Housing and Community Development's Housing Production Trust Fund 2003 Request for Proposal awardees.

These awardees were selected in response to the Department of Housing and Community Development's recently issued \$25 million Request for Proposals (RFP). Through the RFP, the department's goal is to provide quality, affordable housing throughout the District – not just in some areas but especially in the areas across our city that need affordable housing the most.

We received about 60 proposals requesting over \$89 million in assistance for affordable housing and community facilities. The proposed projects that were selected will now move forward through the underwriting and review process of the Department of Housing and Community Development. These projects represent affordable homeownership opportunities, rental housing for families, and housing for our senior citizens and special needs populations.

The projects selected on December 20 will result in over \$145 million of investment undertaken for affordable housing and community facilities in the city. The goal is to help create approximately 1,800 units of long-term affordable housing and provide support for community services that are critical to sustain a high quality of life for all of the District's citizens.

This is a huge asset for our community and a big helping hand for our most needy citizens. For too long, District residents lacked new affordable housing. In 1997 and 1998, for example, there were virtually no housing permits issued in this city. That was and is unacceptable, and I'm pleased to say we're making tremendous progress to turn that around.



Mayor Williams makes housing announcement at Plymouth Church.

US Conference of Mayors Releases Homelessness Report

Two weeks ago, the US Conference of Mayors released its 18th annual Status Report on Hunger and Homelessness in America's Cities. The report documents increases in requests for emergency food and shelter assistance in 25 cities, including Washington, DC.

The report was released by Boston Mayor Thomas Menino (currently President of the US the Conference of Mayors), Nashville Mayor Bill Purcell, and me at the DC Central Kitchen. According to the report, hunger is a continuing problem in the United States. During the last year, requests for emergency food assistance increased in 100 percent of the survey cities.

This issue is one I have cared passionately about all my life. I thank the US Conference of Mayors for having had the foresight to monitor the hunger and homeless situation in our country. It shows us that our sister cities are also challenged by a drastic increase in the hungry and homeless population. This is a serious problem not only in our city, but also across this nation. Our economy has and continues to trigger such a response.

We're working diligently to address this issue here in the District. Last winter, our Continuum of Care included 3,870 hypothermia beds at 54 sites; 2,235 transitional rehabilitative housing beds at 87 sites; and 2,119 supportive housing beds at 47 sites. We are increasing those numbers this winter. We have a system in place to care for our most vulnerable citizens. Our continuum also includes feeding programs at 65 sites; outreach and drop-in centers at 29 sites; job services at 11 sites; and health services at 17 sites.

It's difficult to accept that on any given day, there are more than 10,000 people who are homeless in this city. Last winter, we had 9,907 people in our Continuum of Care, and we expect the numbers to increase this year.

That is why we've added 50 beds at the Gale School and 115 beds at Meridian Hill Baptist Church, Sacred Heart Church, St. Aloysius McKenna Center, United Way, and Unity Fellowship Church. Later this month, we are opening up the Franklin School with another 160 beds. During cold months, I also like to remind DC residents of our Hypothermia Hotline, through which they can report people struggling in the cold: 1 (800) 535-7252.



Lydia's House Groundbreaking

Last year, when I walked through the Bellevue community in Southwest, I noticed boarded-up windows in buildings at South Capitol and Atlantic Streets. A few weeks ago, I was pleased to announce that next spring Lydia's House, a community-based non-profit organization, will move into these revitalized buildings.

The new facility will consist of three state-of-the-art computer labs for community use, as well as after-school care and housing and financial literacy counseling services. Working in partnership with the non-profit community, we are changing an eyesore into something beneficial for the community. These buildings have been boarded up for more than eight years.

The rehabilitated 6,000 square-foot building will house the Far Southwest-Southeast Community Development Corporation offices and Lydia's House youth initiatives that provide year-round out-of-school programming for 200 children, ages 6-12. The Far Southwest-Southeast Community Development Corporation and Lydia's House staff members are excited to be working with the city to mark this momentous occasion in the revitalization of Bellevue community.

Lydia's House is investing in the lives of men, women, and children – one at a time. Its mission is to establish lasting change for families living in Anacostia's far southwest and southeast neighborhoods. Lydia's House takes a holistic approach to family development, providing multi-faceted services to address the needs of low income, at-risk families.

I'm pleased that by working together — in public-private partnership — we're now able to provide our citizens with the services they deserve. Taking down the boards from the windows translates into jobs, technology training, recreation, housing, entrepreneurship, and neighborhood stability.

District Activities



President George W. Bush addressed a crowd during a joint tour with Mayor Williams of the Capital Area Food Bank in northeast Washington on December 19. The president stressed the importance for all Americans to help the needy, especially during the holiday season.



Mayor Williams and Boston Mayor Thomas Menino donned aprons and gloves to help prepare meals for the homeless at the DC Central Kitchen on December 18. The event was held as part of the US Conference of Mayors' release of its 18th annual Status Report on Hunger and Homelessness.



Mayor Williams, joined by his wife Diane Simmons Williams, takes the oath of office for his second term as Mayor of the District of Columbia. The oath was administered by DC Superior Court Judge Rufus G. King III.



Mayor Williams and "Ben Franklin" prepare to raise an American flag at the Wilson Building at the request of the National Constitution Center, a museum dedicated to the US Constitution that will open in Philadelphia in July, 2003.



Community News

- Mayor Williams Hosts Grand Lighting Ceremony at District Building
- Mayor Announces New Venture Capital Firm to Spur Small Business Growth
- DC Council Confirms Veterans Affairs Director

[Click here](#) to view news releases.

Upcoming Events

01/25 Forum on Crime and Prevention
8:30 am - 1 pm
Eastern Senior High School
1700 East Capitol Street, NE

